



Training Accreditation Council FACT SHEET

Assessing in the Workplace

Background

The prime responsibility of a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is to certify the competence of individuals against nationally recognised training products. The gathering of reliable evidence against these requirements is critical for the RTO in establishing whether a person is competent. For industry and the community to have confidence in the RTO's assessment judgement, they must be assured that a quality assessment process occurs and valid, reliable decisions about competence are made.

Assessment can occur in many environments such as the RTO's premises or in the workplace. The workplace can provide an important opportunity for learners to further develop practical skills in a real workplace environment and to demonstrate the application of the knowledge and skills acquired.

This fact sheet provides guidance to RTOs on conducting quality assessment in the workplace in relation to Clauses 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.13, and 2.2 of the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* (the Standards).

The Relationship between the Learner, the Workplace and the RTO

There are many different approaches to assessing in the workplace and all involve a relationship between three parties - the learner, the workplace and the RTO. Irrespective of the approach, strong learner outcomes and high quality experiences for all parties share common features including:

1. strong and cooperative partnerships;
2. clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations understood by all;
3. effective support for learners; and
4. continuous improvement.

A Strong and Cooperative Partnership with the Workplace

Strong and cooperative partnerships do not happen by chance. There are several strategies that RTOs can use to help establish and maintain partnerships with a workplace.

A Common Vision

It is very important for all parties to have a common vision for what will be achieved from the partnership activities. Talking about expectations and purpose and reinforcing this throughout the partnership builds effective working relationships.

Clear Roles and Responsibilities

It is vital that all parties know what they are committing to in the partnership. The RTO may provide information that describes who is doing what, when and how – this will allow all parties to act from a common understanding. A cooperative approach means that each party can recognise each other's way of working, it allows for flexibility and any amendments to the plan can be made by agreement to accommodate working practices.

Establish the Ground Rules

Having clarity about ground rules such as time, costs, communication pathways, reporting, and commitments is critical. Forming an agreement on these matters should be one of the first actions taken when establishing a partnership.

Communicate Clearly

All parties should have the opportunity to provide constructive feedback about aspects of the partnership and include opportunities for capturing and acting on formal and informal feedback. This provides the opportunity to negotiate changes to the scope of the partnership or the way it is implemented - regular, inclusive, and respectful communication is the key.

Clear Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

When considering the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all parties regarding workplace assessment, many RTOs use a training and assessment strategy (TAS) to describe how the qualification is delivered and assessed.

The Strategy

A TAS describes how the RTO will deliver and assess the training product for their learner cohort (Clauses 1.1 and 1.2 of the Standards). The purpose of the TAS is to ensure:

- the RTO has a structured and consistent approach to planning and delivering training and assessment for the specific program and specific learner cohort;
- the training and assessment is relevant to the requirements of specific workplaces and addresses the identified organisational needs to the satisfaction of the learner;
- documentation is available to training and assessment staff so that they are clear about how the program is to be conducted for the specific learner cohort;
- the required materials and resources are sourced and available; and
- consistent high-quality delivery and assessment is made available to the learner and other stakeholders.

The primary audience of the TAS are trainers and assessors in the RTO however when the strategy incorporates assessment in the workplace, there are aspects of the document that can help the workplace understand the proposed assessment and their role. For many organisations the TAS, or an abridged version of it, is a good starting point to help the workplace understand their role in providing evidence as it frames the more detailed discussion and planning that follows. For further information on training and assessment strategies refer to [TAC Fact Sheet – Developing Training and Assessment Strategies](#).

Planning for Assessment in the Workplace

When an RTO is considering assessment in the workplace, the assessment can be undertaken by the assessor on site, or in combination with an industry qualified workplace supervisor who collects evidence for the assessor to use to make the assessment judgement. In each circumstance there are questions the RTO and the workplace need to answer including:

- What is the purpose of the assessment that will be conducted in the workplace?
- What type of assessment will meet that purpose?
- What are the required assessments (number and type) and in what timeframe?
- How does the learner access the workplace for the purpose of assessment?
- How will the RTO document the assessment plan and who needs to agree to the plan in the RTO and in the workplace?
- Who in the workplace needs to know about the agreed assessment plan?
- How do we assure that each of these people are clear on their roles and responsibility?
- If the learner is an apprentice or trainee - what are the Training Contract obligations and how are they addressed?
- How does the RTO and workplace resolve any issues or problems that arise during the assessment process? and
- How will the RTO and workplace evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment process?

The agreed answers to these questions can be used to frame delivery and assessment plans, tools and similar documents, as well as drafting a third party arrangement, if one is required. For further information on third party arrangements refer to [TAC Fact Sheet – Third Party Arrangements](#).

RTOs assessing in the workplace may experience some challenges regarding access for assessors, particularly when there are safety issues or remote locations involved. In these circumstances the RTO may need a third party to gather the necessary evidence to support an assessment judgement, which may require additional considerations for the RTO including:

- Who is an appropriate staff member to undertake the role of third party evidence gatherer?
- What is the best way to work with this person as part of an assessment team?
- How and when will this person be briefed about the assessment requirements by the RTO?
- What tools/supports will the RTO provide to this person to use during the assessment process?
- Have the assessment tools been contextualised to support the assessment requirements?
- How will the RTO ensure that the person is using the tools/supports as intended?
- How will this person be involved in or contribute to the assessment judgment?

Answering these questions will assist the RTO to coordinate with the evidence gatherer, and ensure that all parties including the learner, understand that any evidence collected by the evidence gatherer will be used to support the RTO to make the assessment judgement.

Inducting Workplace Staff

People from the workplace who are supporting the assessment process are often subject matter experts but may not have a background in training and assessment. The RTO is responsible for ensuring that all people involved in the assessment process are fully informed and prepared for their role so that the RTO is able to provide a valid and reliable assessment process. There are a number of approaches when undertaking workplace assessment including:

The RTO is accessing the workplace to conduct assessment

Where the RTO is conducting assessment in the workplace, an agreed assessment plan will have been developed. The induction process will provide the RTO with the opportunity to introduce the assessment plan and its implementation to the workplace supervisor. It is important that the workplace supervisor understands:

- the assessments to be conducted;
- timing and duration of the assessments;
- how to work with the RTO to provide access to the student and any workplace equipment or facilities needed;
- support that might be required from the workplace for the assessment; and
- feedback they may need to provide about the performance of the learner in the workplace for the assessment.

The workplace is providing an evidence gatherer for the assessment process

Where there is an evidence gatherer from the workplace, there are additional considerations for the RTO to assure the integrity of the assessment process.

Using an evidence gatherer potentially introduces risk to the reliability and fairness of an assessment process and the validity and sufficiency of the evidence that is gathered. This is because the evidence gatherer is not always:

- a qualified assessor;
- involved in development of assessment tools where evidence requirements are discussed and agreed upon;
- involved in industry engagement processes where industry rather than specific employer requirements are determined; or
- involved in validation processes where clear understandings and benchmark requirements are established.

Through the induction process and the implementation of the assessment plan, it is critical that the RTO ensures the evidence gatherer:

- is clear on their role in the assessment process;

- is familiar with the workplace assessments and outcomes of the unit of competency which enables them to understand and collect the necessary evidence that will support competence;
- understands the assessment instruments they will be using to gather the evidence including the instructions for use;
- understands any benchmarks used in the assessment instruments they use;
- knows how to access the RTO for advice and supporting; and
- participates in regular discussions and reviews of the evidence gathering process.

Wherever possible the induction process should be *face to face* and supported by documentation that is well-structured, in an accessible format and provides the evidence gatherer with all the information they need.

RTOs are obligated to conduct assessment validation (as per Clauses 1.9 – 1.11) and where an evidence gatherer from the workplace is involved in the assessment process, they will ideally be involved in validation activities. Involving the evidence gatherer helps generate a shared understanding of what a competent performance looks like, as well as an understanding of the assessment process. For further information on validation refer to [TAC Fact Sheet – Assessment Validation](#).

The Assessment Instruments and their Influence on Quality

The quality of the RTO's assessment instruments provided to evidence gatherers can significantly impact on the quality of evidence collected and the ability of the RTO to make an assessment judgement using that evidence. Consider the following two examples of excerpts from checklists related to workplace health and safety.

Example 1: Working Safely

Complete the checklist for each learner. If you have seen the learner complete the task you can place a tick in the relevant box. If you have not seen the learner complete the task, then please say no, or put a cross in the relevant box.

Outcome	In the workplace the learner can:	Yes / No
Follow workplace safety procedures	Identify procedures relating to personal safety	✓
	Reported unsafe situations and hazards according to workplace procedures	✓
	Reported machinery and equipment breakdowns according to workplace procedures	X
	Identified and reported fire hazards according to workplace procedures and taking the required precautions	✓
	Identified and followed workplace manual handling procedures	✓
	Participate in workplace health and safety (WHS) consultative arrangements established by workplace	✓
Feedback for the Learner Good job Brooksy.		

Example 2: Working Safely

Please use the observation checklist while the learner is completing a maintenance task in the workshop. Make sure that you include either copies or photos of the documentation listed in the checklist.

Task Date	1/2/20	Learners Name: John Jones
The Task		Evidence Collector: Tim Doey
What was the task the learner completed.		List the documentation the learner accessed and used for the task? <i>WI 2.4</i> <i>Manufacturer's Instructions</i> <i>MSDS – Cleaning Fluid Type B</i>
<i>Disassembled, repaired, and reassembled a wheel hub for an xxx Machine.</i>		The learner selected and used correct PPE for the task <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referred to mandatory signage <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referenced the work instruction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referenced the risk assessment
		Include a photo/s of the learner using the PPE required for the task. <i>Attached, 1, 2, 3, 4.</i>
		Attach a copy of the Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for the task, ensure the signature page is included. <i>Attached 5.</i>
<i>Cont...</i>		Attach the Take 5 safety form completed by the Learner. <i>Attached 6.</i>

Task Date	1/2/20	Learners Name: John Jones
The Task		Evidence Collector: Tim Doey
What was the task the learner completed.		The learner disassembled the wheel hub in accordance with the steps in the work instruction and Manufacturer's Instructions. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work instruction followed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tooling was used correctly and safely <input type="checkbox"/> Two person lift or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mechanical lifting aid <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The components marked and labelled
<i>Disassembled, repaired, and reassembled a wheel hub for an xxx Machine.</i>		The learner inspected, measured, and calculated clearances correctly and made appropriate recommendations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identified excessive wear on components <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referenced Manufacturer's Instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Used the measuring equipment correctly <input type="checkbox"/> The calculations made were correct <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tagged out damaged components.
		Include a photo/s of the out of service tags completed by the learner. <i>Attached 7</i>
Feedback for the Learner – <i>When using the vernier callipers you must make sure that the callipers are perpendicular to the component that you are measuring. Because you didn't do this the measurement was wrong and it impacted your calculations. Otherwise, the task was completed safely and the documentation was complete and accurate. TD</i>		

Example 1 - where shall we start!

This example provides the RTO with minimal information that would be useful for assessment purposes. The checklist doesn't:

1. identify who the learner is;
2. who collected the evidence; or
3. when the task was undertaken.

The RTO doesn't know what task was undertaken or how the evidence gatherer decided the task was done properly, as there are no benchmarks. There is also no useful feedback for the learner about why there was a cross against one of the criteria. This leaves the RTO uncertain - was this because it was irrelevant to the specific task or because the learner performed this part of the task incorrectly? The checklist will not enable the RTO to make a quality assessment judgement.

Example 2 - in contrast addresses the deficiencies from Example 1.

This checklist addresses the workplace safety requirement in the context of a typical task the learner would be expected to complete in the workplace. It makes more sense to both the learner and the evidence gatherer when written in this way. The checklist includes information that would enable the assessor to verify the choices made by the evidence gatherer. For example, the assessor could access the work instruction and see what PPE requirements and personal safety requirements were related to the task. This can be cross checked with the photos that have been supplied and the JHA and Take 5 Safety Form. This

approach allows the RTO to assure the quality of the evidence that has been gathered and then used by the RTO to make the assessment judgement.

Effective Support for Learners

The learner is central to all services offered by an RTO and all RTOs have an obligation to effectively support learners to enable them to achieve the outcomes of the training product they are enrolled in.

Learners should be made aware of a known point of contact for support in the RTO and are confident they will be able to contact that person when needed or if they feel their needs in the workplace are not being met.

When delivery of the training product includes a workplace component, the RTO must consider what else they need to do to support the learner. In most instances, this will involve workplace training and assessment. At a minimum, the RTO should ensure the following are in place relevant to the training/assessment activities.

The learner has an orientation/induction to the workplace that includes:

- a tour of the site/facilities;
- an introduction to the organisation (services offered, units/departments, workplace standards, lines of communication/reporting, hours of work, etc.);
- an introduction to key staff members, including supervisors with a clear understanding of each of their roles in providing support, for example:
 - *Jane is the workshop supervisor, Jane will be doing your rostering and checking in weekly to see how you are progressing.*
 - *Tom is your team leader and will be working with you each day, helping you practice the skills you need. Tom will also be working with the RTO to collect the necessary evidence the RTO requires and will then use for assessment.*
- the learner is given all the information and documents they need and understand their obligations. This might include time sheets, policies and procedures, codes of conduct and emergency procedures; and
- to assist, there should be a schedule of appointments between *the RTO* and the *learner* to gauge progress and check if there are any issues that need to be resolved.

There should also be regular meetings between *the workplace supervisor* and the *learner* to determine if the learner is:

- experiencing any difficulties and whether any additional support is required;
- getting enough guidance; and/or
- progressing well.

There is a regular review by *the RTO* and the *workplace supervisor* to ensure they are performing their roles as intended. If not, determine what additional information, processes or support is required for the supervisor to meet their obligation to the RTO, and identify for both parties when this will be reviewed again.

Continuous Improvement

Clause 2.2 of the Standards specifies the RTO systematically monitors their training and assessment strategies and practices to ensure ongoing compliance with Standard 1, and systematically evaluate and use the outcomes of the evaluations to continually improve the RTO's training and assessment strategies. Clause 2.2 is focused on evaluation of the RTO's services and operations. Central to this is improving the training and assessment and support services offered by the RTO. When conducting assessment in the workplace an evaluative process clearly extends to these services.

Ideally, RTOs will plan to collect feedback from all parties involved including the learner, the workplace staff and the trainer/assessor. Rather than wait until the end of any program the RTO should consider conducting evaluations throughout the term of partnership. The RTO will determine the:

- data needed to evaluate the quality of the services provided;
- timing, frequency, availability and accessibility of the data;
- decisions about service improvements based on data analysis; and
- protocols for sharing the data and decisions based on the analysis.

Feedback collection doesn't have to be a complex process and RTOs could, for example, interview stakeholders at key points or use a simple survey for large numbers of students. Additionally, observations by the trainer/assessor visiting the workplace could be structured to collect feedback about other aspects of the program, rather than simply conducting the assessment.

The concept of continuous improvement rests on taking action to improve the RTO's processes. Whatever decisions are made about the program, the RTO needs to ensure that improvement actions are implemented and have the intended impact on the quality of the services of the RTO, and its partners.